

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY SAIGON

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

USDEL FRANCE

CINCPAC

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E. O. 11652 N/ A

TAGS: PFOR, XC, US

SUBJECT: MARCH 30 INDOCHINA PRESS SUMMARY

1. ALL PAPERS FRONTPAGE PRESIDENT' S WARNING TO HANOI TO COMPLY WITH AGREEMENT AND HIS CHARGE THAT DRV HAS NOT LIVED UP TO PROVISIONS RELATING TO LAOS AND CAMBODIA AND PROHIBITION AGAINST INFILTRATION. NYT' S HERBERS DESCRIBES HIS TONE AS " TOUGH AND COMBATIVE" AND NOTES HE DIDN' T MENTION NVN AID OR CURRENT CAMBODIA BOMBING. BUT SUN' S KEAT STRESSES PRESIDENT' S CALL TO NATION TO " PUT ASIDE THOSE HONEST DIFFERENCES" ABOUT WAR AND WORK TO MEET " GREAT CHALLENGES OF PEACE."

2. ALL ALSO FRONTPAGE DEPARTURE OF LAST US TROOPS FROM SVN. POST' S GREENWAY REPORTS " UGLY SCENE" INVOLVING LOOTING OF MESS HALL (TO BE USED BY ICCS) BY CT CIVILIANS HOT ON HEELS OF GIS' DEPARTURE DESCRIBES " DREARY LITTLE CEREMONY" AT WHICH WEYAND AND BUNKER DEACTIVATE MACV, NOTING THAT FEW REMEMBERED BLOODY BATTLES OF PAST. GREENWAY SEES PARALLEL WITH 1956 DISSOLUTION OF FRENCH HIGH COMMAND, AND REMINDS THAT SAIGON MONUMENT TO FRENCH UNCLASSIFIED

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WAR DEAD HAS BEEN REPLACED BY SCULPTURE OF GIANT TURTLE, VN SYMBOL OF LONGEVITY.

3. NYT'S TREASTER SAYS GIS' DEPARTURE LEAVES UNFINISHED WAR THAT HAS DEEPLY SCARRED VN AND US. OBSERVES 7200 CIVILIAN TECHNICIANS REMAIN TO ASSIST RVNAF, AND REPORTS US COLONEL'S PREDICTION THAT WAR WILL RESUME FULL- BLOWN -- IMPLICIT ACKNOWLEDGMENT THAT US NEVER WON WAR, DESPITE GENERAL'S SAYING ARMY " LEAVES WITH ITS CHIN OUT AND ITS CHEST HIGH. IT'S DONE A COMMENDABLE JOB." TREASTER REMINISCES ABOUT SVN CIVILIANS KILLED, MY LAI, FRAGGING, ETC. FOX BUTTERFIELD POKES AROUND FORMER US 25 TH DIVISION HDQS AT CU CHI AND FINDS NUMBER OF SOUTH VIETNAMESE WHO HAD NICE THINGS TO SAY ABOUT " THE AMERICANS" (NYT). SUN'S ISAACS ALSO TAKES OCCASION TO REMINISCE.

4. WITH DEPARTURE OF LAST POW FROM HANOI, ALL PAPERS FEATURE DESCRIPTIONS OF TORTURE, HUNGER AND DISEASE IN COMMUNIST PRISONS. DOS OFFICIAL DENIES ADMIN POLICY TO " COORDINATE" POW PRESS CONFERENCES. FRIEDHEIM SAYS MEN COULDN'T SPEAK OUT UNTIL YESTERDAY.

5. ALL PAPERS ALSO FEATURE HANOI DISPATCHES DESCRIBING DEPARTURE OF LAST POWS. NYT'S BROWNE SAYS THOUSANDS OF NVN CIVILIANS " WATCHED AND SMILED AND WAVED." POST'S LIPPMAN SAYS PEOPLE IN HANOI " HARDLY NOTICED" BUSES CARRYING POWS TO GIA LAM.

6. RICHARDSON PLEDGES HUNT FOR MISSING MEN IN SEA; BUT FRIEDHEIM SAYS INTERVIEWS WITH RETURNING MEN HAVEN'T " TURNED UP ANY SURPRISES." TWO WEEKS AGO RICHARDSON DOUBTED VERY MANY WOULD TURN UP ALIVE (CHITRIB).

7. PRESIDENT BELIEVED PREPARED MAKE STRONG PUBLIC COMMITMENT TO THIEU DURING LATTER'S US VISIT (SUN). NHAN DAN SEES US TROOP WITHDRAWAL AS MAJOR NVN VICTORY, AND SITUATION INCREASINGLY FAVORABLE TO HANOI. CHARGES US WITH FAILURE TO IMPLEMENT IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF AGREEMENT. SAYS HANOI CONTINUES HOLD US RESPONSIBLE FOR CONTINUED FIGHTING BY GVN " TOOL" (WP).
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8. DOD SAYS CLEARING OPS IN HAIPHONG SHOULD END NEXT MONTH (WP). DRV CLAIMS MINES DIDN'T HAMPER COMMERCIAL FISHING (WP).

9. KISSINGER REPORTEDLY CITES ART. 20 OF VN AGREEMENT AS BASIS FOR CAMBODIA BOMBING IN PRIVATE BRIEFING OF HFAC, AND HOPES KHMER C- F WILL TAKE PLACE WITHIN MONTHS OR EVEN WEEKS (CHITRIB, SUN). NYT'S FINNEY REPORTS JAVITS, MATHIAS AND HATFIELD DENY PRESIDENT HAS AUTHORITY

TO BOMB CAMBODIA AFTER TROOP WITHDRAWAL. JAVITS IN
SENATE SPEECH SAYS CONGRESS MUST DETERMINE WHETHER

10. ADDRESSING DOS BRIEFING FOR EDITORS AND BROADCASTERS,
ASST. SEC. GREEN ACKNOWLEDGES THERE IS DISTURBING
MOVEMENT TOWARD AUTHORITARIANISM IN SOME ASIAN COUNTRIES.
BUT " AS LONG AS THERE IS NOT ANY SERIOUS REPRESSION AND
IF THEY ARE MOVING THEIR COUNTRIES AHEAD, IMPROVING
THE LIFE OF THEIR PEOPLE AND EXTENDING CIVIL LIBERTIES
TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE, THEN I THINK THESE THINGS ARE
CERTAINLY UNDERSTANDABLE" (REUTER).

11. U. S. SUPPORT ACTIVITIES GROUP MOVES INTO TOP
GEAR IN THAILAND AS SAIGON HQ CLOSES UP SHOP. USSAG
IS DIRECT SUCCESSOR TO MACV; WILL BE OPERATIONAL HQ
FOR U. S. FORCES IN INDOCHINA AND HAVE COMMAND HQ AT
NAKORN PHANOM (AP, SUN).

12. LAT' S MCARTHUR (MAR. 29), IN SAIGON, DISCUSSES
AMERICAN PRESENCE IN SVN AS UNIFORMED TROOPS NOW
REDUCED TO 159 MARINE GUARDS AT US EMBASSY AND 50
OFFICERS IN DAO. COMMENTS THAT US PRESENCE, PARTICULARLY
IN SAIGON, " REMAINS ABOUT AS ILL- CONCEALED AS THE
WASHINGTON MONUMENT." ESTIMATES ABOUT 10,000 AMERICANS
REMAIN; OVER 90 PERCENT IN OFFICIAL OR SEMI- OFFICIAL
JOBS. MACV HEADQUARTERS NOW ACCOMMODATES ABOUT 1,000
PENTAGON CIVILIANS ATTACHED TO DAO. BUT LOCUS OF US
POWER HAS SHIFTED BACK TO CIVILIAN HANDS - TO EMBASSY
WHICH HOUSES AMBASSADOR AND SAIGON COMMAND CENTER
OF CIA. IN PLACE OF PACIFICATION APPARATUS, US
NOW OPERATES FOUR REGIONAL " CONSULATES" (LOCATED
WITHIN HAILING DISTANCE OF FOUR ARVN HEADQUARTERS)
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WHICH FULFILL SAME FUNCTIONS AS CORDS. NOTES THAT
BUNKER IS EXPECTED LEAVE SOON, AND UNOFFICIAL WORD
IS HE WILL BE REPLACED BY GRAHAM MARTIN, MAN WITH
REPUTATION AS INDEPENDENT SPIRIT.

13. STAR- NEWS (MAR. 29) MARKS END OF FIRST 60 DAYS
OF C- F, SAYING US " RESPONSIBILITIES CONTINUE AS CO-
AUTHORS OF THE TERMS OF THE FRAGILE TRUCE, AS INFLUENCERS
OF OTHER GREAT POWERS WITH AN INTEREST IN THE AREA, AS
GIVERS OF AID TO RECREATE CONDITIONS IN WHICH PEACE
MIGHT BE LASTING."

14. NOYES (S- N, MAR. 29) EXPLAINS NVN MILITARY BUILD-
UP IN TERMS OF ITS POSSIBLE IMPACT ON POLITICAL
CONTEST WHICH IS SUPPOSED TO FOLLOW ESTABLISHMENT
OF REAL C- F. HANOI LEADERS WELL AWARE THAT OUTCOME
OF THAT CONTEST LIKELY TO DEPEND ON RELATIVE MILITARY

STRENGTH OF TWO SIDES. BUILDUP CAN BE READ AS EFFORT TO EVEN POLITICAL ODDS STILL HEAVILY STACKED IN SAIGON'S FAVOR.

15. NYT SAYS PHASE I OF ACCORD HAS NOW BEEN COMPLETED WITH WITHDRAWAL OF US COMBAT TROOPS AND RETURN OF POWS, NOTABLE ADMINISTRATION ACHIEVEMENT. PHASE II, ATTEMPT TO STABILIZE PEACE AND MOVE TOWARD POLITICAL ACCOMMODATION IN SVN, IS TOUGHER. PROSPECTS FOR POLITICAL ACCOMMODATION EXTREMELY REMOTE, AND IN ABSENCE OF POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, FIGHTING CAN BE EXPECTED ESCALATE. IN INTEREST OF US AND CONCERNED OUTSIDE POWERS TO PRESS BOTH SIDES TO REACH ACCOMMODATION. BUT ABILITY OF OUTSIDE POWERS TO INFLUENCE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IS MARGINAL. PHASE II IS RESPONSIBILITY OF INDOCHINESE.

16. WP CLAIMS THAT BY COMPLETING TROOP WITHDRAWALS, PRESIDENT HAS REMOVED HIS SOLE CLAIMED RATIONALE TO BOMB IN INDOCHINA. ONE BEGINS TO UNDERSTAND ADMINISTRATION'S FRANTIC AND SO FAR FUTILE SEARCH FOR REASONS FOR CAMBODIAN BOMBING THAT WILL MAKE IT LOOK LIKE MR. NIXON IS DOING SOMETHING OTHER THAN ROUGHLY AND ARBITRARILY ASSERTING AMERICAN - AND EXECUTIVE - POWER. PLAIN TRUTH IS HE BOMBS TO SAVE POLICY WHICH, IN ITS CAMBODIAN ASPECT, WAS BANKRUPT FROM START.
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